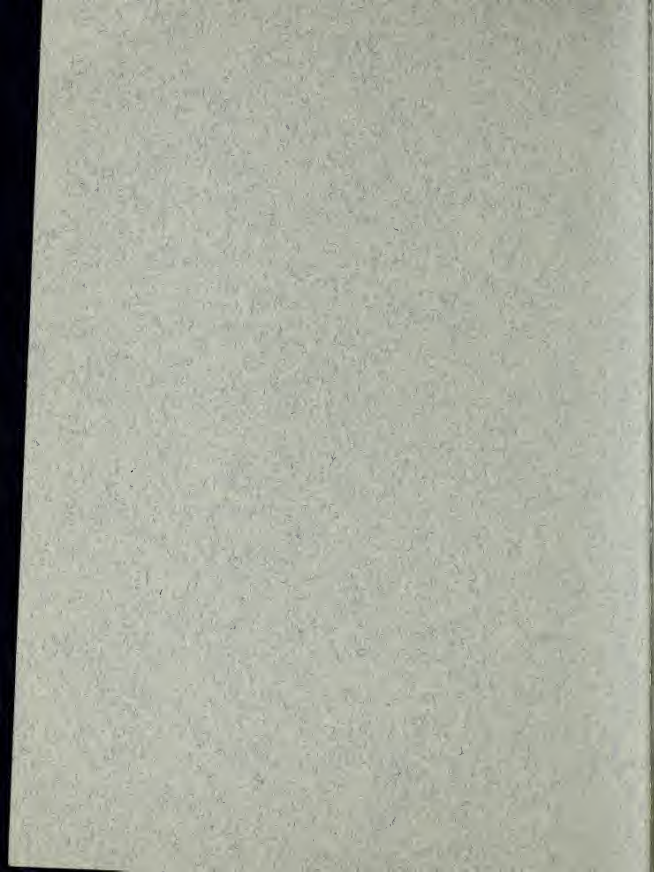


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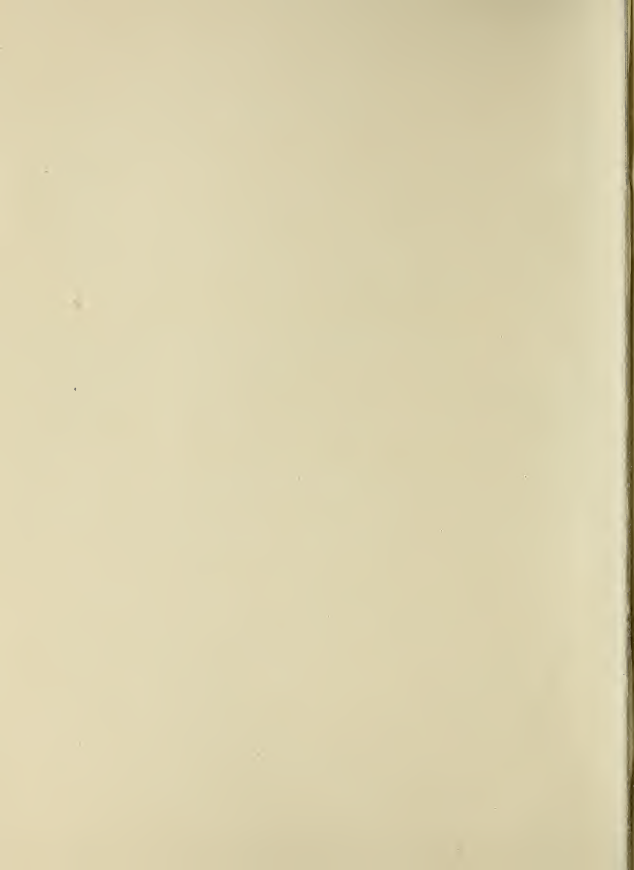
Readington

School.

Hunterdon Historical Series, No. 4.







HISTORY
OF THE
READINGTON SCHOOL,
FORMERLY CALLED
HOLLAND BROOK SCHOOL,
1804—1897.
BY JOHN FLEMING.

FLEMINGTON, N. J. :
H. E. DEATS.
1898.

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When a school was first established at what is now the village of Readington, is not known. An article in Snell's History of Hunterdon and Somerset Counties says, "It is said there was a school near the village a short distance North-west of the mill long before the Revolution"

By reference to the registry of Special Deeds for the County of Hunterdon, Vol. 1, page 95, we find that under an act of the Legislature passed November 27, 1794, Abraham Post, William Spader, Adrian Stryker, Peter Quick, Cornelius Van Horne, Peter Ten Brook, Isaac Brokaw, Abraham Smock, William Ditmars, William Dalley, Andrew Mattis and Derrick Demott, employers of the Readington School, met at the house of Peter Ten Brook, August 4 1804, and voted unanimously in favor of incorporating themselves.

At the same meeting five of their number were chosen Trustees, and their acceptance

of the office reads as follows: "We, the under subscribers, certify under our hands and seals that we have taken upon ourselves to be Trustees in the Holland Brook School, near Readington meeting house, agreeably to an act of Assembly passed 27th day of November, 1798.

William Spader, L. S.

William Ditmars, L. S.

Cornelius Van Horne, L. S.

William Dalley, L. S.

Derrick Demott, L. S."

Aug. 4, 1804

The first recorded meeting (of which we have no date) was for the making of rules and regulations governing the Trustees. The term of office was fixed for one year. The manner of notification of an election for Trustees was by posting notice on the door of the school house or by giving personal notice. At a meeting held March 30, 1805, the Trustees met and chose Cornelius Van Horne, President. and William Ditmars, Secretary. The business done at this meeting was the making of rules and regulations for the government of the School.

Of the twelve named incorporators only the names of Smock, Dalley and Mattis are now found in the District. No account of any meeting being held is recorded until May 25, 1838, when it was resolved to elect three Trustees, and John S Hoagland, John P. Voorbees and Bergen Brokaw were chosen.

In May, 1838, Isalah P. Large, Joseph Thompson and Washington Skillman, School Committee of Readington Township, with R. S. Smith, T. A. Hartwell and A. Martin, of Bridgewater Township (Somerset Co.), fixed the boundaries of the District. January 10, 1840, Dr. Josiah Quimby, John C. Lane and Joseph Thompson were appointed a committee to draft a new constitution. They reported April 6, 1840. It was adopted and although ordered to be recorded, is not found in the minutes. One of its articles probably was that five trustees may be elected, as for some years that number was chosen. In May, 1851, Joseph Thompson, School Superintendent of Readington Township, George W. Vroom, School Superintendent of Branchburg Township, and Lewis Kiple, Herman Hageman and John S. Berger, Trustees of the school, fixed the boundaries of the district and the name was changed from Holland Brook School to that of Readington School, as is recorded in the Clerk's Office of Hunterdon County, in Vol. 3 of Special Deeds, pages 130-1-2.

In June, 1851, a new constitution was adopted.

In June, 1867, a portion of this district with portions of others was taken to form a new district which was called Harlan. The new district existed till 1877 when it was disbanded, and the portion which was taken

from Readington was set back to 1'.

In 1887 Harlan was re-organized and a larger portion than before was taken from Readington to help form Harlan and the boundaries of the district remained unaltered until 1894, when under the school law passed that year the district ceased to exist as a corporation. It is now known as School No. 4, Readington Township. By the school census of May, 1897, it numbered 73 scholars between the ages of 5 and 18 years.

SCHOOL BUILDINGS.

We have no evidence when the first school house was built or where it stood. It is certain that there had been one for a time before 1804 and that it stood where the present one stands. It was a frame building 16 by 20 with a low board ceiling, and stood in the forks of the road on the South-west side of Holland's Brook, with the play grounds in the road as at present.

There were forms around the walls and heavy slabs for seats. This was used as a school house till 1839, when it was sold to John Morehead who used part of the timber in building a tenant house which is still standing and occupied by W. S. Reed.

In 1839 the present school house was built. It is a two-story building, 30 feet long, 21 feet wide, and was erected at a cost of \$704 58. It also had forms around the walls,

but in 1854 they were taken out and seats with castings were put in and are still used

For a number of years a teacher was employed in each room, but since 1856 only one teacher has been employed. The lower room is now used for school purposes and the upper part for prayer meeting and Y. P. S. C. E. meeting.

The minutes state that the school house may be used for prayer meeting and Sunday School, also that it shall not be used for the purpose of a singing school. This caused dissatisfaction, as a portion of the district claimed a legal right to hold a singing school in the house and at a public meeting it was agreed that from and after the next annual meeting for the election of trustees, it should be left to the trustees from year to year whether the house shall be used to hold a singing school, and if they sanctioned it, then to determine the time, afternoon or evening, in order that the disagreeable necessity of frequent meetings may be avoided. Under the school law of 1894 the Board of Education of the township has given permission to hold religious meetings in their school houses, but for other purposes as the member of the Board representing the school sees best.

TEACHERS

In those early days there were no school

districts as now. When a teacher wanted a school the custom was for him to canvass a neighborhood to see how many scholars he could get to attend. If enough signed to make it pay, he was the teacher. The salary was a certain sum per scholar and board around among his employers. As this school had rules and regulations for its government, the teacher was required to sign them, showing his willingness to comply therewith. That those of this day may know how a school was conducted nearly a century ago, they are here given.

Rules and regulations for the government of the Holland Brook School:

As order is requisite for the prosperity of every society, it must be particularly for that which it has in view--the training up of children to render them useful and respectable as members of civil and religious communities, the following rules have therefore been agreed to for the government of the aforesaid school:

1st. As spelling is the foundation of good reading and therefore essential to the scholars, it shall be the duty of the teacher, every morning and evening, at the close of the school to make all those who can spell to stand up in regular order and spell out of the book, each his word, so much as the teacher may think proper.

2d. It shall be the duty of the teacher to

see that those who write, keep their copy books neat and clean, that they may be shown to the trustees of the school on the last Saturday of every quarter, if not every month.

3d. It shall be the duty of the teacher to make the cipherers commit well to memory the different rules of arithmetic, and when the trustees attend, to examine them on said rules if they request it

4th. It shall be the duty of the teacher to make readers read slow and distinct, and attend to the stops and marks.

5th. It shall be the duty of the teacher to open school from the first day of April to the first day of November, every morning at eight o'clock or as near as possible to that hour and every afternoon at two o'clock, and from the first of November to the first of April every morning at nine o'clock and every afternoon at half past one. During the former six months to keep the school in four hours in the morning and three in the afternoon. All which rules I, the teacher, submit to, subjecting myself to removal from the school by the trustees if I do not, with pay only for the time of having taught.

Amendments to the Constitution of the Holland Brook School to proceed after Article 4th:

5th. It shall be the duty of the teacher to open school from the first day of April to the

first day of November every morning at eight o'clock and every afternoon at two o'clock, and from the first day of November to the first day of April at nine o'clock in the morning and every afternoon at one o'clock, or as near as possible to the aforesaid hours, during the former months to keep the school in eight hours each day, and the latter in six hours each day.

6th. It shall be the duty of the teacher to keep strict rules and good order in the said school, but not to make use of any unreasonable or unlawful means so as to have the children abused.

7th. It shall be the duty of the teacher to refrain from spirituous liquors while engaged in this school, and not to enter the school house while intoxicated, nor lose any time through such intemperance.

8th. No teacher shall enter the school unless his article be first examined by the trustees, to ascertain a sufficient number of scholars.

All which rules I the said teacher agree to submit to, together with the foregoing rules and the amendment, subjecting myself to remove from the said school by the trustees if I do not, with pay only for the time of having taught.

The above rules continued in force till 1851 when a new Constitution was adopted.

The first teacher to comply with these

rules was Tunis TenEyck and his compliance is dated April 9, 1806. After him was M. Flannery, who taught but a short time. The next was John H. Cooper, who stayed nearly ten years. He was succeeded by Harry B. Knox, then Zalmon Taylor, George Urquhart, Lewis Dunn, Philip Tunison, Rodney T. Hyde. Mr. Hyde taught at Pleasant Run before he came to Readington, and a few years ago the writer was informed that while Mr. Hyde was there a Sunday School was started, and he having the keys of the school house and being not friendly to Sunday Schools, refused to open the door, so other means were used and after that there was no more trouble from him.

After Mr. Hyde came William Armstrong, George W. Phelps and Joseph Thompson. Of the latter little need be said, as he was known to many. He filled various positions of honor afterward. While he was School Superintendent in 1855, he conceived the idea of having a picnic of all the schools of the township. The picnic was a success. Several of the State officials were present and made short addresses. In 1834 Jacob G. Schomp took charge of the school. For more than 50 years he and Mr. Thompson lived in the district and their funerals were largely attended. Mr. Thompson died in 1893, and Mr. Schomp died October, 1896.

Amy S. Lundy, the next teacher, was the

first female to teach here. After her was Francis Hastings. Joseph Thompson again taught, but this time during the Winter only. In the Spring John Simonson took charge. He afterward became a minister in the Reformed (Dutch) Church. He was the last who taught in the old school house.

In 1839 the present school building was erected and the first to teach in it was Elizabeth W. Lundy, sister to the Miss Lundy who taught here in 1835. After her were H. T. B. Spader, Jas. Otterson, Jr., F. D. Lord, Ripley T. Martin, Margaret Vosseller, now living in Somerville; Joseph House, Elizabeth B. Owen, Whitlock N. Harvey and Peter I. Voorhees. Mr. Voorhees, after teaching a few years at other places in the neighborhood, went to farming, was successful, and died in 1889. The next teacher was Elizabeth Webb. A few months after she began teaching a new Constitution and By-Laws were adopted. This also required the teacher to sign before he began. The part relating to the teacher is as follows:

Art. 3, Sec. 4. The trustees shall cause every teacher before he or she enters on the duties of teaching to subscribe to the following rules concerning teachers, and for a non-compliance without the consent of the trustees, may dismiss said teacher at any time, with pay only for the time taught.

Art. 4, Sec. 1. The teachers shall keep the

school open seven hours in each day, between the first of April and the first of October, and six hours between the first of October and the first of April following, the time of opening and the length of the noon vacation to be regulated by the teacher with the consent of the trustees.

Sec. 2. The teacher shall keep good order in said school, but shall not use any unreasonable means for that purpose.

Sec. 3 The trustees shall take such oversight of the school as may be necessary, and see that no class of learners are neglected in their lessons or recitations

Sec. 4. No teacher shall be allowed to teach in this district school house without the consent of the majority of the trustees, and no teacher shall be allowed to teach more than four weeks without a license first had and obtained according to law.

Sec. 5. Every teacher shall keep seventy days for a quarter and shall vacate one day in every two weeks.

Art. 5. The trustees or any one of them for improper conduct may be expelled from office at any time by the votes of two thirds of taxable inhabitants present in favour of said expulsion, notice having been given him or them in writing five days previous of such intention.

The first teacher to sign the new rules was Eleanor S. TenEyck, and her compliance is

dated Sept. 30, 1851.

Then Conrad Simonson. E. W. Merritt, who afterward became a preacher and when last heard of was living in Connecticut; Gilbert Lane, who also taught here some years afterward; John S. Amerman, S. F. Voorhees, Henry Lane, John N. Voorhees and Peter I. Voorhees. (The last five or six may not be in the correct order.) John N. Voorhees taught a select school at Middlebush some years afterward. Stephen Wever, after teaching a few years, went to farming and died near South Branch. Sylvester Robins now lives near North Branch Depot. Henry R. Martin was the last one to sign the rules, but a few who are named did not. W. T. F. Ayers was afterwards County Superintendent of Schools of Somerset county, and died a year or two ago. Rev. William I. Thompson, formerly principal of the Preparatory School, Rutgers College, and Amos H. Kennedy, (both dead.) John C. Holder, the first teacher under the school law of 1867, now lives in Plainfield. Levi Fleming, died 1875. Jane Fleming, Mina N. Rockafellow. These two are living near Readington. Anna E. Sutphin, Mary E. Honnel, Jane Fleming, Rev. Gilbert Lane, who afterward received a call from a church, died at Montague. 1896; Mina N. Rockafellow, William A. Hoffman, living at present in Kansas; Robins Fleming, now in the em-

ploy of the Berlin Iron Bridge Co., and living at New Britain, Connecticut; Joanna S. Wack, George Fleming, now principal of the Academy at Junction; Emma Wyckoff, Nora Bunn, living near Readington; Kate Van DerBeek, Nora Bunn Gano, (Miss Nora Bunn married while here) Bertha Smith, living in South Dakota; Lillie Cole, living near Readington, and who has been engaged to teach the school the coming year, beginning Sept. 6th, 1897, and Peter B. Hall, Neshauc Station.

Under the school law of 1894 we have had Helen B. Waite, living in Trenton; Hattie Swackhammer, now living at Califon; J. B. Maugham now teaching at Bernardsville, and Mari B. Rudeboc, now at Ringoes.

George Fleming started the Public School Library and additions were made to it each year while he was teacher.

Arbor Day was first observed here with appropriate exercises, and also Columbus Day, (1892) when Lillie Cole was teacher.

SCHOLARS.

This paper would not be complete without some reference to those who were pupils in this school. Several of them became teachers and were successful. As we look at the past, memory recalls the names of not less than twenty-five. Joseph Thompson had three sons and a daughter who were teachers. John B., the oldest son,

(now living in Trenton, N. J.,) in his younger days was an active member of the first and second Teachers' Institutes held in New Jersey, at Somerville in 1849 and 1850. He also assisted in organizing the first Teachers' Institute in Hunterdon county, in 1855. A few years later he graduated from Rutgers Theological Seminary, New Brunswick, and has been pastor of several churches. In 1870 the degree of D. D. was conferred on him, and in 1896 he was chosen Moderator of the General Synod of the Reformed Church of America. Henry P. Thompson was pastor of the Reformed Church at Peapack published a history of that church, and a few years later a history of the church at Readington. Abraham Thompson was pastor of a Reformed Church in New York City at the time of his death. He and his brother Henry P. are buried in the cemetery at Readington. Their sister, who was a teacher, now lives in Pella, Iowa.

Other scholars, who in after life were ministers of the Reformed Church, were Gilbert Lane, Andrew Hageman, now at Belleville; Herman Hageman, High Falls, N. Y.; John L. Stillwell, Bloomingburg, N. Y.; William B. Voorhees, (deceased,) and Elias W. Thompson, (a grandson of Joseph Thompson) now at Paterson. The writer has heard the nine ministers named preach

in the church at Readington.

In the profession of the law Readington is represented by John Schomp, who died in 1895, and John L. Connet, of Flemington. Andrew Fleming (father of the writer) while living in Cedar Grove School District (Somerset county) sent three of his children to school here. These three (Jane, George and Robins) and their brother, Levi, taught here afterwards. In 1884 Mr. Fleming moved to Readington, and a grand-daughter living with him attended school here, and is now teaching near Pennington. Mr. Fleming had five children and four grand-children who were teachers.

Those who took up the practice of medicine were William D. Quimby and Aaron L. Stillwell.

Peter G. Schomp, President, and Aaron J. Thompson, Secretary, of the Farmers' Mutual Fire Assurance Association of New Jersey, were members of the school.

Many of our scholars became teachers, and some of them have taught the Readington school.

From what is written it can be seen that from our school, rural as it is, there have gone forth as large a number of pupils who have become influential members in the church and neighborhood as may be found in any other.



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